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SENSITIVE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [MD](#)
SUBJECT: Romania-Moldova Spats Burnish Nationalist
Credentials of Both Presidents, Harm Relations

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Accordingly.

11. (SBU) Summary: After disputed parliamentary elections in Moldova followed by violent street demonstrations on April 7, the presidents of Romania and Moldova have engaged in tit-for-tat accusations and counter-measures that benefit both domestically, but have seriously harmed bilateral relations. It appears that Russia is taking advantage of this hostility and fanning the fires in order to thwart Moldova's European aspirations and harden positions on Transnistria. End summary.

Latest Round Started after April 7 Riots

12. (SBU) On April 8, one day after rioters in Chisinau burned the Parliament building and damaged the Presidency, Moldovan President Voronin accused Romania of involvement in an attempted coup d'etat and expelled Romanian Ambassador Teodorescu. The Cabinet imposed a visa requirement on Romanian citizens the same week. The following week, Romanian President Basescu rejected all accusations and requested that the Romanian cabinet amend the Romanian law on citizenship to ensure a rapid processing of applications for citizenship submitted by Moldovan nationals. Voronin responded by refusing accreditation to the newly appointed ambassador Mihnea Constantinescu.

The EU Fails to Defuse Tensions, Basescu Raises Ante

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13. (SBU) On May 7, the European Parliament, in an attempt to solve the problem with an appearance of even-handedness, adopted a resolution which condemned accusations against one of the Union's member-states, but also recommended that Bucharest reconsider the decision to grant citizenship to huge numbers of Moldovans. Eight days later, on May 15, Basescu declared that he would accelerate the citizenship process, and hinted that he would bypass Chisinau authorities by working directly with Moldovan district officials. More significantly, Basescu broke sharply with past practice by stating that no Romanian President

would ever sign a Border Treaty with Moldova, since "it would legitimize the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact."

The Importance of the Border and Framework Treaties

14. (SBU) Lack of a border and a framework treaty between Romania and Moldova has long troubled the relationship between the two countries, but the issue was negotiated in a desultory fashion and then swept under the rug, until Basescu's categorical refusal on May 15. Some Moldovans blame Romania for delays in signing the treaties. They believe that Romania does not want to recognize Moldova as an independent state with international borders, because recognition would prevent unification of the two countries. Because the idea of unifying the two countries has some popularity in Romania, signing the treaties could be politically suicidal for any Romanian leader, some observers maintain. Moldova, challenged by the unresolved separatist conflict in Transnistria, regards these two treaties as an essential contribution to any settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. Fears that Moldova could become part of Romania feed the suspicions of Tiraspol hawks. Even the theoretical possibility of Moldova's union with Romania has served to strengthen Transnistrian desires to gain independence from Moldova. Moldova is also critical of the fact that Romania signed border and framework treaties with Ukraine on the eve of Romania's accession to NATO and does not want to

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sign similar treaties with Moldova.

And the Beat Goes On

15. (SBU) The conflict continued as the Government of Moldova (GOM) on May 19 accused Romania of not recognizing Moldova's statehood and of supporting plans to integrate Moldova into Romania. The statement accused Basescu of "generating a new source of instability in Europe." In the latest move, President Basescu has cancelled his scheduled participation in the June 5 summit of the Southeast European Cooperation Process (SEECP) in Chisinau.

Russia Taking the Lead in Accusing Romania

16. (SBU) Russia was prompt to accuse Romania of feeding, if not masterminding, the April 7 turmoil in Chisinau. Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov has repeatedly requested that the EU take a hard line on Romania's alleged involvement in organizing an attempted coup in Moldova. Valery Nesterushkin, Moscow's chief negotiator in the 5-plus-2 process, and Transnistrian leaders have recently indicated that the ongoing crisis in Moldova was hampering resumption of talks on Transnistrian settlement. Further progress in the settlement process will be hindered by allegations coming from Moscow and Tiraspol about Moldova's possible union with Romania, which would leave no other solution for Transnistria but independence.

Comment: Domestic Advantage, Bilateral Harm

¶7. (SBU) Comment: The intensity of the rhetoric and the incessant tit-for-tat are troubling. Both presidents are still at it, short-sightedly enhancing their images as fighters for their national interests. This war of words has damaged bilateral relations and EU-Moldovan relations; aggravated the east-west divisions within Moldovan society; and hampered the resumption of talks on a Transnistrian settlement.

Chaudhry